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THE BLOOD COVENANT.*

Of authors who have never perpetrated a new idea there is no lack, but those who give the world a new thought are like angels' visits. The task of the book-reviewer is often dreary in the extreme, as he encounters day after day the same old commonplaces thinly disguised with fresh powder and paint, and new jackets. They wander up and down in the earth, like the immortal Jew, seeking rest and finding none. How few are the books that yield a new idea, an idea that sticks, that becomes a dominant factor in one's thought. He who begets, or discloses, such an idea becomes in the best sense of the word an author. Such is the writer of this book. It is hardly possible for any man, acquainted with theological thought, to read this book without being profoundly impressed by it. There are writers who have "a bee in the bonnet," who, becoming possessed by an idea, magnify it out of all proportion, and perforce bend everything favorable or unfavorable to its support. We distrust them. Facts which bear legitimately upon an argument suffer because they are in bad company. It is therefore refreshing to open a book that is not vitiated by special pleading in favor of a preconceived theory; in which there is not even a theory propounded, scarcely anything beyond a clear, systematic marshalling of facts from which the reader is compelled to see for himself the conclusion which the facts disclose.

Dr. Trumbull is popularly known as the able editor of *The Sunday School Times*, and from his pen have been published several most valuable Bible helps. What Bible student has not heard of that extraordinary volume on *Kadesh-Barnea*?—a book that has won the enthusiastic admiration of the foremost Semitic scholars of this country and of Europe, as one of the most remarkable of modern contributions to the elucidation of Scriptural history. This new volume, aside from the appendix, consists of three lectures delivered before the Summer School of Hebrew in Philadelphia, June 16–18, 1885. While the form of the lectures has been retained, the text has been considerably expanded by the presentation of additional facts. The subject-matter of these lectures grew out of a clew which opened a mine of remarkable richness. Any attentive student of the Scriptures cannot fail to be struck by the persistent reference to blood, and the apparently profound significance attached to it. It meets us everywhere, from Genesis to Revelation, not only in the primitive worship of the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, but in the consummation of the Gospel scheme of redemption. Read, for example, the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and see how utterly inadequate is the prevalent superficial theory in accounting for the extraordinary language there used. Nor have the rejectors of the doctrine of blood-atonement been slow to perceive this remarkable peculiarity of the inspired writings, and to sneer at Christianity as a religion that savors of the slaughter-house, and that represents God as a monster who delights in blood. This must of course be regarded as a slander; but in the absence of a thoroughly satisfactory reason for this pre-eminent emphasis on blood, we have for the most part been disposed to accept the fact, while remitting the explanation to the unsolved mysteries of providence. This volume on the "blood-covenant" throws a surprising light on

* THE BLOOD COVENANT. A Primitive Rite and its Bearing on Scripture. By H. Clay Trumbull, D. D., author of *Kadesh-Barnea*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885. Pp. viii, 350. Price, \$2.00.

the problem itself. This covenant as practised from the most ancient times, and among savage and half civilized peoples to-day, is "a form of mutual covenanting by which two persons enter into the closest, the most enduring, and the most sacred of compacts, as friends and brothers, or as more than brothers, through the intercommingling of their blood, by means of its mutual tasting, or of its intertransfusion." The three lectures deal respectively with "The Primitive Rite Itself;" "Suggestions and Perversions of the Rite," and "Indications of the Rite in the Bible." They aim to exhibit and demonstrate the existence of these "universally dominating primitive convictions: that the blood is the life; that the heart, as the blood-fountain, is the very soul of every personality; that blood-transfer is soul-transfer; that blood-sharing, human, or divine-human, secures inter-union of natures; and that a union of the human nature with the divine is the highest ultimate attainment reached out after by the most primitive, as well as by the most enlightened mind of humanity."

In its final application the blood-covenant deals, then, with the profoundest problems of soteriology; it co-ordinates the Old Testament and the New, and shows how the one is the necessary and legitimate outcome of the other; it focuses a multitude of scattered rays upon the mystery of the Atonement, on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and on the believer's personal union with Christ; it reveals an astonishing harmony between the fundamental truths of revelation, and the primary, universal convictions of the race, and shows that the latter unmistakably spring from the same divine mind as the former; it is the scarlet thread upon which the saving doctrines of Judaism and Christianity crystallize in exquisite beauty and symmetry.

The volume is a marvel of research, considering that the field it covers is hitherto unexplored. The author seems to have ransacked all literature ancient and modern, archæology, medical science, travels, poetry, and folk-lore; Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Roman antiquities, Chinese and Indian lore, Scandinavian sagas, and patristic literature have yielded their contributions of illustrative facts. This material is handled with consummate scientific skill. There is no flight of imagination, no tumid rhetoric. Everything is subordinated to a presentation of facts, and such inductions as may be derived from them by no undue pressure. We do not see, therefore, how the main principle of the book can be successfully controverted. The facts are indisputable, and they tell their own story. Nor can we refrain from commending the volume as a most striking and valuable contribution to the religious thought of the world. It is emphatically one of the few books that no religious thinker can afford to be without. We doubt if any man can rise from its perusal without feeling that his grasp of saving truth is stronger, clearer, and more comprehensive than ever before.